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THE TRAINED TEACHER

"THE greatest fault in the schools of our country lies in the professional weakness of our teachers." With the numberless normal schools and pedagogical departments of our universities, it is surprising to find such a large proportion of our teachers untrained, and more especially the teachers in our secondary schools. It shows a lamentable amount of ignorance on the part of boards of education as to what are the necessary qualifications for an instructor of youth. Of course, when a teacher is once in a position it is hard to get rid of her. A few marry; others die—but the poor teacher neither marries nor dies, and her "pull" keeps her in her place. It is poor and unwise economy to retain in office teachers who take no interest in their work. When teachers consider institutes and associations "a bore," then you may know that they are not teaching because they love their work, but they are teaching because it is a "decent business," or in the hope that "something more conducive to happiness" will result from it. In a high school of twenty-four teachers only eight were members of the county association; eleven did not take any school journal; seven had not read the report of the Committee of Ten; and ten had not read the report of the Committee of Fifteen—and this three months after the publication of the latter report. This is certainly a very bad showing for secondary teachers. Not to have read the literature that was written especially for them is surely unpardonable.

I recently made an investigation of the high schools, selecting the representative cities of the states, and found that 72 per cent. of the men teachers were college graduates and 30 per cent. of the women teachers—but there were 85 per cent. more women than men. President Schurman, of Cornell University, in a recent address said that of the teachers in this country only 15 per cent. were normal graduates, and that only $33\frac{1}{3}$ per cent

were men. The average length of a teacher's term of service he placed at seven years.

Superintendent Nightingale, of Chicago, in an address before the Michigan Schoolmasters' Club, took high ground for the scholarly equipment of secondary teachers. He said: "The very minimum of preparation should be a college education—an education general in character, removed at least four years from high-school training; and, where circumstances may permit, I would add one year of resident graduate work along specified lines, and two years of study and travel abroad."

But there is no attraction in our profession for bright intellects—although we have many among us. "We find that it is merely used in many cases as an expedient to a better and more lucrative employment—not to say profession."¹ A prominent lawyer in one of our western cities, who had been a very successful teacher, once said to me that nothing could induce him to go back to teaching, and he added: "It is far more satisfactory to go into the court room and meet one's equals."

There is a constant complaint on the part of teachers that the profession is not properly appreciated, but it certainly will not be until we make it worthy of appreciation. So long as the American standard remains so low that a graduate of a district school, without further preparation, is eligible for membership in the profession, a license to teach cannot command any special respect. The fact that "teachers' wages" is always used in the reports of the state superintendents is in itself a reflection on teaching as a profession.

The yearly scramble for position is something that ought to make people think twice before they enter the ranks of teachers, and this very thing has no doubt driven from among us many good men. In my investigation of which I made mention above, I found that only fifteen cities elected teachers for more than one year, and of these ten reported that they were elected "during good behavior." It is very evident that teachers in these cities can go off on their summer vacation and enjoy themselves. Some boards of education announce that teachers will be retained

¹ United States Commissioner of Education.

on "fitness and merit," which has a very soothing effect upon the teachers, for every one feels that he or she has this "fitness and merit," but when the list is made up for the ensuing year many are surprised to find their names "dropped," and it puzzles the members of the board to make good their statement of retaining all upon "fitness and merit." Marcy's motto, "To the victors belong the spoils," has extended even to boards of education, and with every new board there is a redistribution of the "plums"—their friends must be taken care of.

We shall have better teachers, better salaries, and greater permanency and tenure of office:

1. *By state examinations.*—I have only to cite the case of New York to prove my assertion. Uniform examinations for all the teachers in the state, issued by the state superintendent, have given teachers better in scholarship and methods, higher salaries, and a greater tenure of office. All the teachers are examined at the same time throughout the state, and all the papers are reviewed at the superintendent's office at Albany. The report of the superintendent for 1894 says that during the seven years that the system had been in operation forty thousand teachers had been refused certificates, and that during that year (1894) "one thousand different persons had been told that they did not possess the necessary literary qualifications to enter upon the work of teaching, and were thus debarred from entering the schoolroom as teachers."

2. *By better normal schools.*—By this I do not intend any serious reflection on our normal schools, but I mean that we need normal schools of a higher standard. The Albany State Normal College (New York) is an example of what I have in mind. This institution now does only professional work, and has power to grant degrees in pedagogy. As the normal schools now are, there is no inducement for a college graduate to take up professional work in them. If he does, he works at a great loss, for he is thrown in with students who have not the grasp and scope of reasoning that he has, and often he works under teachers who have not the scholarship that he himself possesses. The normal schools must have a "new birth." They must

establish a new basis of working, or the country will soon have no use for them. "Unhappily, experience shows that no part of the educational system is so prone to deteriorate and become not only sterile, but injurious; so that the normal schools need the most able supervision and inspection to protect them from the peculiar and insidious dangers inherent in the nature of their work."¹

We do not need more normal schools, but we do need more normal colleges—something that will give us real professional work and not spend three-fourths of the time on academic studies. The departments of pedagogy of our universities are doing grand work for the teaching profession, and it is to be hoped that all universities will soon have such departments.

3. *By greater fraternity.*—Teachers are not thoroughly organized. We need more organizations such as the Massachusetts Schoolmasters' Club, the Michigan Schoolmasters' Club, the New England Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools, the Association of Colleges and Preparatory Schools of the Middle States and Maryland, the Conference of Academic Principals of the State of New York, and the Regents' Convocation of the University of the State of New York. By means of these associations the standard of the teaching profession has been raised in the eastern states; more professional courtesy has resulted—a thing "devoutly to be wished" in many places.

4. *By a reform in boards of education.*—I found in the investigations which I made that the number of members of boards of education varied in the different cities from three to forty-five, but that the prevailing number was nine; that the prevailing term of office was three years; and that it was a rare thing for the term of office of all the members to expire at the same time. More than half reported that the members were elected by popular vote, and a large majority of these by wards. Seven reported that the board of education was elected by the city

¹ PRESIDENT G. STANLEY HALL. See also "The Case of the Public Schools," by DR. HALL, in the *Atlantic Monthly*, March 1896, and by DR. ATKINSON in the April number of the same magazine; also "Teaching: A Trade or a Profession?" by PRESIDENT SCHURMAN, in the *Forum*, April 1896, which articles have appeared since this paper was prepared.

council, and seven that it was appointed by the mayor. I will mention a few. Boston has twenty-four members elected by popular vote, one-third retiring annually. Cambridge (Mass.) has sixteen, the mayor being a member *ex officio*. The others are elected by wards for three years, one-third retiring each year. Brooklyn (N. Y.) has forty-five appointed by the mayor for three years, one-third retiring each year. Albany (N. Y.) has seven on its board, appointed by the mayor for seven years, one retiring each year. Buffalo (N. Y.) has no board of education—the city council taking charge of the financial and legislative part, and the superintendent, who is elected by popular vote, looking after the administrative part of the system. Philadelphia has thirty-five members, appointed by the judges of the court to hold office for three years. Charleston (S. C.) has nine elected for life. Savannah (Ga.) has twelve members elected for life, with power to fill vacancies. New Orleans has twenty members elected for four years—twelve by the city council and eight by the State Board of Education. Chicago has twenty-one appointed by the mayor, one-third retiring each year.

In nearly every case the boards have the power of appointing the teachers. One board asks the principals to recommend, and then wholly ignores these recommendations—like the Quaker, who said he asked the advice of his friends, and then did as he had a mind.

Boards of education should be elected from the city at large, and from the best men available, whose duties should be merely legislative, and who should leave the appointment of teachers—reserving the right to reject—in the hands of the superintendent, who should be an expert in all methods and details relating to the running of the schools. Until this “golden era” arrives teachers will be on the market every year. This is humiliating in the extreme. The annual scramble for position does not tend to give us better-trained teachers.

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